## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1. A method of setting a compressive force in an assembly, comprising:
  - placing a film between first and second contacting surfaces in the assembly, the film having an optical property responsive to a pressure pattern between the first and second contacting surfaces;
  - providing the compressive force at an initial level to the first and second contacting surfaces to generate an initial pressure pattern;
  - removing the compressive force and removing the film from between the first and second contacting surfaces;

sensing the optical property to derive a sensed initial pressure pattern; providing a stored setting controlling the compressive force; and comparing the sensed initial pressure pattern to a reference pressure pattern and updating the stored setting to adjust the compressive force as a function of the comparing.

- 2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the optical property is sensed by an optical densitometer providing a densitometer reading.
- 3. The method of Claim 1 wherein the film has thickness that is less than 120 micrometers.
- 4. The method of Claim 1, wherein the first contacting surface is a disc clamp surface, the second contacting surface is a disc surface, and the sensed initial pressure pattern diagnoses a surface defect.
- 5. The method of Claim 1, wherein the assembly includes a cavity and the first and second contacting surfaces seal the cavity.
- 6. The method of Claim 1, wherein the first contacting surface is a cover gasket surface, the second contacting surface is a housing surface, and fasteners provide the compressive force.

- 7. The method of Claim 1, wherein the first contacting surface is a printed circuit cable header gasket surface, the second contacting surface is a housing surface, and fasteners provide the compressive force.
- 8. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:
  - diagnosing a defect in at least one of the first and second contacting surfaces as a function of the sensed initial pressure pattern.
- 9. The method of Claim 1, wherein the first contacting surface is a label surface and the second contacting surface is a roller surface that is movable over the label surface.
- 10. The method of Claim 1, wherein the first contacting surface is a manufacturing fixture clamp surface, the second contacting surface is a disc drive housing surface, and a manufacturing fixture provides the compressive force.
- 11. The method of Claim 1, wherein the first contacting surface is a leak tester gasket surface, the second contacting surface is a housing surface, and a test fixture provides the compressive force.
- 12. An apparatus that sets a compressive force between first and second contacting surfaces in an assembly, comprising:
  - a film between the first and second contacting surfaces, the film having an optical property responsive to a pressure pattern between the first and second contacting surfaces;
  - a compressive force generator applying a compressive force at an initial level to the first and second contacting surfaces to generate an initial pressure pattern;
  - an optical sensor sensing the optical property to derive a sensed initial pressure pattern;

- a stored setting controlling the compressive force; and
- a comparator receiving the sensed initial pressure pattern and a reference pressure pattern and updating the stored setting to adjust the compressive force as a function of the comparing.
- 13. The apparatus of Claim 12, wherein the optical sensor comprises an optical densitometer providing a densitometer reading.
- 14. The apparatus of Claim 12 wherein the film has thickness that is less than 120 micrometers.
- 15. The apparatus of Claim 12, wherein the first contacting surface is a disc clamp surface, the second contacting surface is a disc surface, and the sensed initial pressure pattern diagnoses a surface defect.
- 16. The apparatus of Claim 12, wherein the assembly includes a cavity and the first and second contacting surfaces seal the cavity.
- 17. The apparatus of Claim 12, wherein the first contacting surface is a cover gasket surface, the second contacting surface is a housing surface, and fasteners provide the compressive force.
- 18. The apparatus of Claim 12, wherein the first contacting surface is a printed circuit cable header gasket surface, the second contacting surface is a housing surface, and fasteners provide the compressive force.
- 19. The apparatus of Claim 12, wherein the first contacting surface is a label surface and the second contacting surface is a roller surface.

- 20. The apparatus of Claim 12, wherein the first contacting surface is a manufacturing fixture clamp surface, the second contacting surface is a disc drive housing surface, and a manufacturing fixture provides the compressive force.
- 21. The apparatus of Claim 12, wherein the first contacting surface is a leak tester gasket surface, the second contacting surface is a housing surface, and a test fixture provides the compressive force.
- 22. An apparatus that sets a compressive force between first and second contacting surfaces in an assembly, comprising:
  - a film between the first and second contacting surfaces, the film having an optical property responsive to a pressure pattern between the first and second contacting surfaces;
  - a compressive force generator applying a compressive force at an initial level to the first and second contacting surfaces to generate an initial pressure pattern; and
  - a sensor sensing the optical property to derive a sensed initial pressure pattern; and
  - means for storing a setting controlling the compressive force and for comparing the sensed initial pressure pattern to a reference pressure pattern and for updating the stored setting to adjust the compressive force as a function of the comparing.
- 23. The apparatus of Claim 22, wherein the assembly includes a cavity and the first and second contacting surfaces seal the cavity.
- 24. The apparatus of Claim 22, further comprising:
  - diagnosing a defect in at least one of the first and second contacting surfaces as a function of the sensed initial pressure pattern.

25. The apparatus of Claim 22, wherein the optical property is sensed by an optical densitometer providing a densitometer reading.